Topic Summary: Preventing Heat Stress at Work

Employers: Now is the time to get ready for summer. Take steps now to educate your workers on preventing heat-related illness. Make sure they know the signs, symptoms and appropriate first-aid procedures for serious heat illnesses.

How do you prevent heat illness?

- Supply adequate water and encourage workers who work in hot weather to drink regularly, even when not thirsty (a cup about every 15 minutes is recommended).
- Learn the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness.
- Workers need to avoid alcohol or drinks with caffeine before or during work in hot weather.
- Try to do the heaviest work during the cooler parts of the day.
- Adjusting to work in heat takes time. Allow workers to acclimatize. Start slower and work up to your normal pace.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored, breathable (e.g. cotton) clothing and a hat.
- Take regular breaks from the sun. Loosen or remove clothing that restricts cooling.
- Watch co-workers for symptoms of heat-related illness. This is especially important for non-acclimatized workers, those returning from vacations and for all workers during heat-wave events.
- If exertion causes someone's heart to pound or makes them gasp for breath, become lightheaded, confused, weak or faint, they should STOP all activity and get into a cool area or at least into the shade, and rest. Call for a supervisor immediately.

The two major heat-related illnesses are heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion, if untreated, may progress to deadly heat stroke. If workers show symptoms, *always take this seriously* and have them take a break and cool down before returning to work. *Stay with them.* If symptoms worsen or the worker does not recover within about 15 minutes, call 911 and have them transported and medically evaluated. *Do not delay transport.*

What are the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke?

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke
 Heavy sweating Exhaustion, weakness Fainting / Lightheadedness Paleness Headache Clumsiness, dizziness Nausea or vomiting Irritability 	 Sweating may or may not be present Red or flushed, hot dry skin Any symptom of heat exhaustion but more severe Confusion / Bizarre behavior Convulsions before or during cooling Collapse Panting/rapid breathing Rapid, weak pulse Note: May resemble a heart attack

See more information on reverse.

What do you do if someone is suffering from heat exhaustion or heat stroke?

Heat Exhaustion	Heat Stroke (medical emergency)
 Move the worker to a cool, shaded area to rest; do not leave them alone. Loosen and remove heavy clothing that restricts evaporative cooling. Give cool water to drink, about a cup every 15 minutes. Fan the worker, spray with cool water, or apply a wet cloth to their skin to increase evaporative cooling. Recovery should be rapid. Call 911 if they do not feel better in a few minutes. Do not further expose the worker to heat that day. Have them rest and continue to drink cool water or electrolyte drinks. 	 Get medical help immediately, call 911 and transport as soon as possible. Move the worker to a cool, shaded area and remove clothing that restricts cooling. Seconds count – Cool the worker rapidly using whatever methods you can. For example, immerse the worker in a tub of cool water; place the worker in a cool shower; spray the worker with cool water from a garden hose; sponge the worker with cool water; or, if the humidity is low, wrap the worker in a cool, wet sheet and fan them vigorously. Continue cooling until medical help arrives. If emergency medical personnel are delayed, call the hospital emergency room for further instruction. Do not give the worker water to drink until instructed by medical personnel.

What are the regulations for working outdoors in hot weather?

On June 1, 2006, L&I is modifying a current rule which covers heat stress hazards to clearly include outdoor work. This emergency regulation requires employers to evaluate their workplaces and determine if employees will be at risk from heat-related illness during temperature extremes and hot weather. This modified rule, combined with other existing rules, addresses the variety of Washington workplaces and their specific solutions to heat stress. See the "Pertinent Rules for Heat Stress" chart at: www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ/HeatStress/.

If there is a risk from heat-related illness, workplaces must have a safety plan in place to train employees on preventing heat-related illness and recognizing the conditions leading to heat stress and worker symptoms. Also, employers must provide sufficient, clean drinking water and first-aid training in accordance with applicable industry worker-safety rules.

Other Resources

- Please see the L&I web site at www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety/Topics/AtoZ/HeatStress/ for a list of training resources such as illustrated handouts, information cards, videos, "tool-box talks" and other training tools.
- L&I staff are available to provide free workplace-safety consultations on heat stress or other safety and health issues. Please contact the nearest L&I office and ask for the safety consultation supervisor, visit the L&I web site at www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Basics/Assistance or call 1-800-423-7233.
- L&I offers a brief presentation geared towards safety supervisors or risk managers who are responsible for training workers. Please call 1-800-574-2829 to request a copy of this presentation or to schedule trainer training for your organization.

Just imagine... resources at your fingertips! We can help you improve the safety and health of your workplace.

If you're an employer in Washington State, you must provide a safe and healthy workplace for your employees. For example, you must have a written safety program that covers the work your employees perform.

The Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) is here to help you meet safety and health requirements. Here are a few of our services:

Onsite Consultations

Learn about workplace safety and health requirements. A safety consultant from the Department of Labor and Industries will come to your business and assess your employee safety and accident prevention programs. Call your local L&I office or 1-800-423-7233 (4BE-SAFE).

Training Resources and Helpful Guides

Access online guides to help you write your accident prevention program or meet requirements for personal protective equipment. You'll also find online safety and health training modules and other training resources. Visit www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety/TrainTools/.

Safety and Health Video Library

The largest safety and health video library in the United States is available to employers and workers in Washington State. You'll find a complete description of every video on our web site at: www.Videos.LNI.wa.gov. Your only cost to use the library is return postage (using a traceable carrier).

To request videos:

Call: 360-902-5444 or 800-574-9881 (toll-free); fax: 360-902-5675

Governor's Industrial Safety & Health Conference

The 55th Annual Governor's Safety & Health Conference takes place September 27-28, 2006, at the Spokane Convention Center. For more information, call: **1-888-451-2004** or visit the web site at www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety/TrainTools/GovConf/.

Division of Occupational Safety and Health

A Mission to Accomplish: Save Lives.

Prevent Injuries and Illnesses.

Protect the Safety and Health of Washington's Workers.



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On the web: www.LNI.wa.gov/safety/

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Http://www.ini.wa.gov/wisha

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